

***Gut Salmon, Not Schools!***  
**Talking Points for Education Allies**



## WHAT WE NEED

**A Significant and Sustained Funding Increase** – To make up for lost buying power, we need a \$1000 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) this year, followed by \$400 increases in the next two years and annual inflation adjustments thereafter. *Increasing the BSA benefits neighborhood schools, charter schools, and public homeschool options.*

## 5 FACTS

- **State funding for education has not kept pace with costs.** Since 2011, the base student allocation has fallen behind inflation by 25%.
- **We are spending more and more on incarceration and less on education.** Since 2017, state spending on the Department of Corrections rose 44% while spending on the Department of Education and Early Development, which includes aid to districts, fell 4% *without accounting for inflation.*
- **We spend less than the national average on education.** According to the Institute of Social and Economic Research at UAA, Alaska's per-student spending was 15% below the national average in 2023 when adjusted for geographic costs.
- **Districts are unable to recruit and retain teachers.** The state had [598 vacant teacher positions](#) on the first day of the current school year, the highest number ever recorded, and more than double (+230%) the number of vacancies in fall of 2020.
- **Alaska is losing its allure - and its workforce.** More people have left Alaska than moved to Alaska for 12 straight years, and Alaska's nonresident workforce hit a [record high](#) of 24% in 2023, the most recent year for which data are available.

## 5 POINTS

- **Invest in schools, not prisons.** We can be proactive and invest in education, or pay for incarceration on the back end.
- **Strong schools attract and keep families** in Alaska, while an underfunded system drives families away, making it harder to hire and retain a resident workforce and accelerating economic decline.
- **Business and labor leaders support investment in education** because they understand that a strong economy requires a trained and educated workforce.
- **Public schools serve all kids.** We must protect our neighborhood schools - many Alaskans do not have options such as homeschooling or charter schools, and they choose neighborhood schools.

- **Education is a constitutional obligation.** Alaska's constitution requires the Legislature provide for a system of public schools open to all children, [defined](#) by the courts to include "adequate funding so as to accord to schools the ability to provide instruction in the standards." Schools need predictable and flexible funding to meet their mandate.

## 5 MYTHBUSTERS

- *Claim: "Throwing more money at the BSA won't solve our problems." (Gov. Dunleavy)*  
Reality: All we are asking for is funding that keeps up with costs. After years of losing buying power, our schools are at a breaking point. It's hard to innovate when you can't balance the budget. It's hard to attract and keep the best when you can't offer a competitive salary and benefits. It's hard to build community confidence when everyone is fighting over whose school to close.
- *Claim: Alaska's test scores are in the tank.*  
Reality: When Alaska's schools were well funded and teachers earned a pension, our test scores were above national averages. Funding matters.  
Also reality: In recent years, more students - especially among those homeschooling - are opting out of tests, making these metrics less and less meaningful.
- *Claim: Districts want funding without accountability.*  
Reality: Local school boards are accountable to their communities through elections, public meetings, and processes for public input. State and federal laws provide guardrails, reporting systems, and interventions when needed. Every school district budget in the state is audited and reviewed by the state Dept. of Education & Early Development. State policy makers must also be held accountable: legislators enacted the Alaska Reads Act with accountability for districts, and then failed to fund it.
- *Claim: Alaskans support the Governor's proposals.*  
Reality: The Governor's own 2024 polling found an overwhelming majority of Alaskans - 77% - want more funding for education. While many said they support "reform," this does not mean they support state approval of charter schools.
- *Claim: We can't afford big education funding increases.*  
Reality: We can't afford not to invest in education. Education should be our first priority, not our last. We have revenue-generating capacity - we just need political will.

***Our Children Are Our Future: Invest in Education Now***